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**Providence Human Relations Commission  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
August 1, 2016**

The Open Session of the Providence Human Relations Commission (PHRC) was held at Roger Williams University, 150 Empire Street, room 217, Providence, RI, 02903.

**Commissioners Present:** Patricia LaSalle, John Gaffney, Maria Monteiro, Lucy Rose, Cesar Teo, Matthieu Yangambi

**Absent:** Chace Baptista, Raymond Watson

**Staff Present:** Director Jen Stevens, Asst. City Solicitor Natasha Buckler, ADA Coordinator T. Kevin Olasanoye

**Guests:** Kai LoMuscio, Jeff Prystowsky

**1. Call to Order/Introductions:**

Chair LaSalle called the meeting to order at 5:37pm. A quorum was established, as 6 of 8 commissioners were present. Introductions were made.

- 2. Commissioner Gaffney proposed** to add two discussions to the agenda: the \$40 million bond issue and the Community Safety Act. Chair LaSalle moved to add the discussions to the agenda. Commissioner Monteiro seconded. All voted in favor. The motion passed.

**3. ADA Report by ADA Coordinator T. Kevin Olasanoye:**

Kevin reported that a settlement agreement with the Department of Justice tasked the City of Providence with addressing 70+ items in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). All but three or four items have been addressed. A lack of funds has delayed several required building improvements; therefore the City has planned to address them over time. The City Hall wheelchair lift and the slope of the Public Safety Complex are two examples of these.

Commissioner Gaffney requested a copy of an ADA transition plan that would have been created in the 90s. Kevin believes the City had not created one. Commissioner LaSalle asked if ADA standards have changed significantly in recent years, and Kevin replied that updates made in 2010 do not differ greatly from the standards in place since 2002.

Kevin assured commissioners that the City is taking the need for ADA improvements very seriously, and envisions a collaborative effort toward achieving the goals of the settlement agreement. He referenced [providence.ri.gov/accessibility](http://providence.ri.gov/accessibility) to find what

programmatic accommodations have been made, and offered that Jen could share his contact information with commissioners. He is also happy to share any reports that he has filed with the Department of Justice.

Regarding the proposed \$40 million bond issue, it was suggested that the PHRC could write a letter to the Mayor that advocates that funds be designated for ADA compliance in City-owned facilities. Commissioner Gaffney suggested that Jen draft this letter on behalf of the commission and address it to the Mayor and City Council. There was consensus to do so. Kevin offered language that would be helpful to include. Because the next council meeting is this Thursday, August 10, it was agreed that the PHRC would meet Thursday at noon to make changes to Jen's draft and approve the letter in order to deliver it to Council ahead of its meeting. Natasha will confirm first thing Tuesday morning as to whether we can meet in the Law Department's conference room at 444 Westminster Street. Jen will post the open meeting with at least 48 hours' notice.

**4. Review of June 27, 2016 minutes and vote to accept/amend:**

Chair LaSalle moved to accept the minutes with corrections to the spelling of "Buckler." Commissioner Gaffney seconded. Commissioner Teo abstained, as he had momentarily left the room. The remaining five commissioners voted in favor. The motion passed.

**5. Review of July 11, 2016 minutes and vote to accept/amend:**

Chair LaSalle moved to accept the minutes. Commissioner Monteiro seconded. All six commissioners voted in favor. The motion passed.

**6. Director's Report:**

Jen reported that a complaint was received from a disabled man who claimed to have been denied access to the Independence Day fireworks at India Point Park. Jen made a copy, hand-delivered the report to the RI HRC, and called the complainant to leave a message letting them know they will hear from the RI HRC and that they should feel free to reach out to the PHRC for further assistance. Jen is keeping a record of calls and complaints received, and upon Commissioner LaSalle's suggestion, will maintain a spreadsheet with all appropriate information.

Regular meetings of the PHRC are planned for Mondays on 8/15, 9/26, 10/17, and 11/14. A training by the RI HRC giving an overview of their work will take place on Monday, 9/12. Jen will look into the history behind holding the MLK Awards in February in celebration of Black History Month, rather than around MLK Day. The PHRC is considering a celebration of International Women's Day in March.

**7. Police & Community Relations Panel Discussion:**

Commissioner LaSalle, Jen, and Jeff attended this forum in Providence on July 27. Commissioner LaSalle reported that the discussion addressed tensions between the police and people of color in the community. She believes she will be able to share a video link of the discussion with commissioners.

Jeff suggested that because the PHRC is meant to heal divisiveness between groups, we may be in a good position to handle complaints against police officers.

Jen reported that after the last PHRC meeting, Theresa advised her to look into what trainings are available to police officers. Jen's research led her to meet with Sojourner House Executive

Director Vanessa Volz, as well as the Commission on Prejudice & Bias, and she is reaching out to other groups who provide trainings. Jen reached out to Chief Clements and they will connect about this, perhaps when Jen attends the open police meeting at the Public Safety Complex on Aug. 10.

Commissioner Gaffney suggested that a police officer should attend a PHRC meeting.

**8. Nominations and discussion relevant to the PHRC Executive Committee:**

Commissioner Watson is continuing as Chair. Commissioner LaSalle has been serving as active Vice Chair. Nominations for Vice Chair may still be made, and nominations for Secretary are needed, and can be made to Jen via email. A vote is planned for our August 15 meeting.

**9. Brainstorm community engagement activities: workshop, forum, listening tour ideas:**

This discussion was kept short in light of time. Commissioner Gaffney suggested a workshop on “White Privilege.” Commissioner LaSalle suggested Jordan Seaberry could facilitate it.

**10. Discussion relevant to Commissioner biographies:**

It was reiterated from the last meeting that Commissioners should provide a headshot and 200-word-limited biography. Commissioners may write whatever they want about themselves. Commissioners will share the biographies with each other and have an opportunity to revise them before they are uploaded to the website. The deadline is August 12 so Jen can compile them for discussion on August 15.

**11. Next Meeting: August 4, 2016, 12pm. Location TBA.**

**12. Adjournment: Commissioner LaSalle moved to adjourn. Commissioner Rose seconded. All voted in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:14pm.**